

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
 INTERVIEW WITH BOB SCHIEFFER FOR CBS-TV PROGRAM, "FACE THE NATION"
 GOMA, ZAIRE
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There's much to be said about it, but I want to give you one bottom line before we start a discussion, and that is I believe we have turned a corner here and that the humanitarian relief effort has really taken hold and being quite effective now.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do you hope to have the airlift of relief supplies from going from Kigali by the end of the day?

SEC. PERRY: Better than that, Bob. The biggest impediment, the biggest bottleneck, to getting relief supplies into Goma was the Goma airport. That was limiting our ability to send in supplies, even though we had the airlift aircraft and even though we had the supplies. So it was fundamentally important to improve that situation. We decided Friday night -- the president decided in cooperation with the Rwandan government to open the Kigali airport. He directed me to do that Friday night. We had our teams in Kigali Saturday to do that, setting up the air traffic control equipment. They began 24-hour-a-day operations this morning. There have already been five transport aircraft landed at Kigali today.

This is going to be -- this is going to more than double the throughput of supplies into here, because from Kigali to here it's about 100 miles over paved roads. So we'll be able to establish an overland route from Kigali to Goma. Now, as I said, it's going to more than double the supplies flowing into this area.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right, Doctor, let's bring David Martin into the discussion.

David?

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Secretary, you say you think you've turned the corner, but is the number of refugees in Goma and elsewhere in Zaire still increasing, or is it actually decreasing? Are more now going home than are still fleeing from Rwanda?

SEC. PERRY: Relative to the situation that we're looking at here in Goma, there's been a slight decrease in the total number of people in the camps. Some thousands of refugees have returned, not enough to really make a dent in the problem of taking care of this huge population. There are more than a million refugees here.

MR. SCHIEFFER: We're going to start this morning in Goma, Zaire, where Defense Secretary William Perry is standing by. He has just come from Kigali. And joining us in the questioning this morning with our CBS News Pentagon correspondent, David Martin.

Well, Dr. Perry, why don't you first just give us a report? I know you went to Kigali this morning. How's it going? And what did you see?

SEC. PERRY: First of all, I want to say, Bob, that this is -- what we're seeing here at Goma is a human tragedy of enormous proportion. No one can visit here without having their heart torn by the tragedy all around him. But at the same time, it lifts the human spirit to see the dedicated efforts of the volunteers, the relief organizations, the United Nations, and especially from my point of view it really lifted my spirits to see the dedicated effort of the U.S. soldiers helping these people through this great tragedy.

Over the medium term, the solution to this problem has to be getting the refugees to return to Rwanda to their homes and farms there. To this day at Goma at least the situation is more or less stable. There are probably slightly more people leaving than coming in.

MR. MARTIN: Is it, in your opinion, safe for refugees to return to Rwanda?

SEC. PERRY: We met this morning with the Rwandan government -- the president, the prime minister, the minister of defense -- discussed this issue in detail with them. They told us, and they have announced to the world, that it will be safe for refugees to return there. There will be no reprisals, no retribution, that to the extent there are people guilty of criminal acts, they will be treated -- they will be handled by an international tribunal. This, I think, is very good news, and I think this word needs to get out to the refugees.

MR. MARTIN: But how are they getting the word? What system have you set up to broadcast or otherwise get this message out to so many people?

SEC. PERRY: The Rwandan government has set up a radio broadcast to get this message out. The United Nations is also working to establish a radio communications. And just this morning in my discussion with U.N. officials I promised to provide some technical assistance and equipment to help them get this transmission across.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Mr. Secretary, of course, people back in the United States want to know also about how safe is it for U.S. troops in Rwanda. I wonder if you could talk about that a little bit and tell us how many American troops you expect to be in Rwanda?

SEC. PERRY: I would believe that, within a few weeks, we will reach a level of about 3,000 U.S. troops in this whole area. Of those, only perhaps a few hundred will be in Rwanda. There's a larger number in Uganda, Zaire, and there are some in Mombasa as well. This is part of a large logistics network for flowing supplies into here. And all told, it's about -- it will be about 3,000 people. We're not to that number yet. We have something over 1,000 people

working in the region today.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, is this dangerous work? I mean, will these troops be in danger? Obviously, there's been a lot of killing going on here. A half million people have died already. I suppose the question I'm asking you, what will you do to avoid another Somalia here?

SEC. PERRY: No -- we're in a situation which is just -- in an area which is just recovering from a civil war. There are still citizens wandering around with AK-47s. And so there's an inherent danger in the situation. That's the negative side. The positive side is that American soldiers have been very warmly received, both in Zaire and Rwanda. There have been no threats to American soldiers, no hostility at all.

Now, we cannot -- we don't want to simply assume that that situation will continue. So we have provided some security for our own forces. For example, when our -- as we set up the facility at the Kigali airport, we will be providing an MP company, a military police company, to provide security for that detachment, but they will be working also with the Rwandan government, which is providing security for the overall area.

MR. SCHIEFFER: How long would you think this is going to take, Dr. Perry? How long will American forces be involved here?

SEC. PERRY: First of all, the humanitarian operation that's going on here may take a year or two years for the international scope of it. I want to emphasize that this is an international operation. It's being done by many countries -- Germany, France, Finland, the Belgians. All are contributing to the relief operation here. This is being managed out of the UNHCR, the refugee organization in the United Nations. There are many non-governmental organizations, both U.S. and European, who are working here. They will be here, I believe, well over a year.

Now, the United States' role in this is not to conduct these humanitarian relief operations. It's to provide that specialized logistics support which only the United States military has -- the massive airlift and the specialized equipment we have. Now, I would expect that aspect of the

operation to be over much sooner than that. I can't give you a precise estimate on that, but we're certainly not talking a year.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Secretary, David Martin again. What steps is the U.S. military prepared to take to protect refugees returning to their homes in Rwanda from possible retaliation?

SEC. PERRY: What you're -- the question you're asking, David, is really how is the peacekeeping function going to be performed in Rwanda, and I want to emphasize that the United States is not part of the peacekeeping operation here. We do not have soldiers as a part of the peacekeeping operations and don't plan to. The UNAMIR, which is the U.N.'s name for their peacekeeping operation, is being formed as we speak. We met this morning with General Delare (ph), who is the commander of UNAMIR. He expects to have something over 4,000 troops put together within a few weeks. It will be their job to keep the peace, provide peace stability in this land as it goes through its transition period.

The United States' support of that UNAMIR operation is twofold. First of all, through our support of the United Nations, through our dues to the United Nations, we help underwrite the expense for this. And, secondly, we have been asked for and are providing specialized logistics support. For example, we have offered to airlift in one of the African battalions which will be a part of this peacekeeping force.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Secretary, that's the policy, but as a practical matter, can U.S. troops really stand idly by if the killing resumes in Rwanda?

SEC. PERRY: Our troops are here and equipped to perform a humanitarian mission, not a peacekeeping mission. We care a lot about the peacekeeping mission, but we will support it in the ways I described to you, not by having combat troops participating in it.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Mr. Secretary --

SEC. PERRY: I want to emphasize that the United States is providing this operation the things which we have unique capability to provide. The other aspects of it -- the ground troops and the peacekeeping operation -- can readily be supplied by other countries. That's not

a unique American capability.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Mr. Secretary, one final question. Now that you're on the scene -- the pictures, of course, from here are just overwhelming -- I just wonder what your personal impressions are there after touring this area.

SEC. PERRY: I just say again that it just tears your heart to see the level of tragedy here, but I would emphasize that people that I've talked with who were here a week ago say there's an enormous improvement over just the last week. People in the route that we drove from the airport into town, they said there were hundreds of corpses along the highway just one week ago. We don't see any of that today. We see deprivation. We see suffering. But I believe we truly have turned the corner in terms of stopping the dying and stopping the worst level of misery. By "we," I mean the United Nations and relief organizations here with some logistics assistance from the United States.

I am proud, by the way, of that logistics assistance we've given. I'm proud of the American soldiers who are here working under very difficult and very frustrating conditions. They're really doing, as I told one of them, the work of the Lord.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right, Mr. Secretary. I think that's a fine point to leave it. I want to thank you very much for joining us this morning.

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Perry: U.S. troops could stay a year

By Jack Kelley
USA TODAY

KIGALI, Rwanda — Defense Secretary William Perry Sunday pledged to keep U.S. troops here and in neighboring Zaire for up to one year if necessary to provide relief.

"My heart is torn by the human tragedy that is unfolding," Perry said after seeing stricken refugees in Goma.

"I believe we truly have turned the corner in terms of stopping the dying and the worst level of misery," Perry told CBS's Face the Nation.

U.N. relief chief Filippos Grandi agreed: "Deaths are dramatically declining."

But the problems have not gone away. While the cholera epidemic appears nearly under control — after killing between 50,000 and 150,000 people — humanitarian organizations say dysentery is the latest threat to refugees.

It has broken out in eastern

Zaire's refugee camps. U.N. officials say, and could kill as many as cholera. Relief workers said measles, malaria and meningitis also loom.

Perry visited what he described as the two operations most responsible for optimism: the airlift here in Rwanda's capital and a bustling water purification project in Goma.

Widespread use of contaminated lake water was blamed for the deadly wave of cholera that swept camps last week.

Up to 3,000 U.S. troops will soon be in this central African region providing humanitarian aid, Perry said, with most of them in Zaire and a few hundred in Rwanda.

The main body of U.S. troops arrived at the airport here Sunday and within hours had the runway, — scarred by Rwanda's bloody three-month

civil war — ready for round-the-clock operations.

Five more U.S. relief flights flew into Kigali Sunday, bringing equipment and supplies.

Perry said the opening of Kigali airport would allow the doubling of relief supplies going into Goma, where more than 1 million refugees are languishing in the camps.

"I'm pleased to see this country starting to return to normal, and hopefully the refugees will start returning home, he told reporters.

Perry also said he received assurances from Rwanda's new Tutsi-led government that it would not seek revenge against the majority Hutu for their killing of nearly 500,000 people, most of them Tutsi, during the war.

Nearly 1.5 million Rwandans, most of them Hutu, have fled here after Tutsi rebels of the Rwandan Patriotic Front recently took control of

the country.

Despite those assurances, the United Nations fears another flight of refugees into Zaire if France withdraws its troops maintaining a "security zone" in southwest Rwanda.

French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, who visited Goma Sunday, said France could keep its troops in Rwanda beyond the expiration of their Aug. 22 U.N. mandate.

In Kigali, Perry was welcomed by the victors of Rwanda's war, but they said international aid had come too late for thousands.

"Now what the international community has to help us to do is get our people back. You cannot rule a country without a population or you would be like a government in the Sahara Desert," said Prime Minister Faustin Tugirimungu.

— Contributing: Robert Brand